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ABSTRACT

Conducted in 14 Tennessee counties, this study concentrated on the relationship of Four H project leaders' personal characteristics to performance of, and their feeling of being qualified to perform, a high or low number of tasks. It also investigated relationships between how often extension agents provided information to leaders by various teaching methods, and agents who have a high or low percentage of leaders who perform many tasks. Some of the major findings were: (1) high task performance leaders were more likely to be females, to be teachers, housewives, laborers, or professionals; (2) leaders with more leadership experience and training were more likely to be in the high task performance groups than leaders with little or no leadership experience or leadership training; (3) leaders with more training more often felt qualified to perform more tasks; (4) how often extension agents had given leaders information did not significantly affect the percentage of high task performance leaders per agent. Recommendations stressed further studies on the information provided to leaders and on teaching methods used. (The document includes 23 references.) (LY)

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Extension Study No. 2
S. C. 678

A Research Summary of a Graduate Study

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CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW AND HIGH PROJECT LEADER TASK PERFORMANCE AND TASK QUALIFIED GROUPS IN SELECTED TENNESSEE COUNTIES

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CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW AND HIGH PROJECT LEADER TASK PERFORMANCE AND TASK QUALIFIED GROUPS IN SELECTED TENNESSEE COUNTIES

by

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March 1969

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to show the relation between 4-H project leaders' personal characteristics and those who performed a low or high number of tasks. The study was also to show the relation between 4-H project leaders' personal characteristics and leaders who felt qualified to perform a low or high number of tasks. The study was also intended to show the relation between the frequency agents provided information to leaders, by various teaching methods, and agents with a low or high percent of leaders who performed a high number of tasks.

Some of the major findings were: (1) leaders who were in the high task performance group were more likely to be females, to be housewives, teachers, laborers, or professionals; (2) leaders with more leadership experience, with the exception of the number of years served, were more likely to be in the high task performance group than leaders with little or no leadership experience; (3) leaders who had received more training were more likely to perform a higher number

of tasks than leaders who received little or no training; (4) leaders who had received more training were more likely to feel qualified to perform a higher number of tasks than leaders who had received little or no training; (5) the frequency with which agents had provided information to leaders, by various teaching methods, was not significantly related to whether or not an agent had a low or high percent of leaders who performed a high number of tasks.

Recommendations made included (1) further studies be done concerning the frequency of providing information to leaders by various teaching methods; (2) further studies be done concerning information provided to leaders; and (3) the findings be made available for use by the county and state 4-H staffs.

RESEARCH SUMMARY*

I. PURPOSE AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to show the relation between leaders' personal characteristics and (1) the leaders' performance of a low or high number of tasks and (2) whether the leaders felt qualified to perform a low or high number of tasks. This study was also to show the relation between the frequency which agents provided information to leaders by various teaching methods and whether agents had a low or high percent of leaders who performed a high number of tasks.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To determine if 4-H project leaders' personal characteristics were related to leaders' performance of a low or high number of tasks.

2. To ascertain if 4-H project leaders' personal characteristics were related to leader feelings of being qualified to perform a low or high number of tasks.

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3. To discover if 4-H project leaders' leadership experiences were related to leaders' performance of a low or high number of tasks.

4. To study 4-H project leaders' leadership experiences to see if they were related to a leader feeling qualified to perform a low or high number of tasks.

5. To find out whether or not the training 4-H project leaders have received was related to a leader performance of a low or high number of tasks.

6. To study the training received by 4-H project leaders to determine if it was related to leader feelings of being qualified to perform a low or high number of tasks.

7. To see if the frequency with which agents provided information to leaders by various teaching methods was related to the number of tasks performed by leaders.

II. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population included 4-H Club project leaders and Extension agents doing youth work in 14 Tennessee counties. The counties were selected by using a constant of 1.9 or more full-time Extension staff equivalents responsible for 4-H work per county. Twenty-four counties met this requirement, and from these 24 counties those with between 11 and 30 leaders and those with more than 70 leaders were included in the study.

The data collection instrument was developed by Extension agents doing graduate work in Agricultural Extension with the assistance of

The University of Tennessee Extension Training and Studies Department.

Characteristics of Extension agents and 4-H project leaders, including personal characteristics, leadership experience, training leaders participated in, methods used in training, and subjects in which leaders were trained, were selected which research and the experience of Extension personnel indicated might be related to the performance and qualifications of 4-H project leaders.

Fifty-five tasks were selected which agents felt were extremely critical or very critical to the success of 4-H project work.

A questionnaire was developed for 4-H project leaders which included project leaders' personal characteristics and questions related to the 55 tasks. The Extension agent questionnaire dealt with agents' characteristics and questions related to the 55 tasks.

The names, addresses, and number of years each 4-H project leader had served were obtained from the Extension agents in the selected counties. A questionnaire was mailed to each individual leader and Extension agent doing youth work in the selected counties.

Each of the 27 Extension agents completed and returned questionnaires. Of the 463 4-H project leaders who were mailed questionnaires, 225 usable questionnaires were completed and returned.

III. DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES

4-H Project Leader Characteristics

Thirteen independent variables concerning the characteristics of 4-H project leaders were studied. These variables were leaders' sex, age, occupation, number of years served as a 4-H project leader, number

of members helped in 1967, number of project group meetings held in 1967, if leader attended project leader training meetings, attendance at project leader training meetings in 1967, number of project leader training meetings attended in 1967, how well leaders felt their job was explained to them when they first became a project leader, and if leaders felt they did or did not need more information on and training in 4-H project work.

4-H Project Leader Performance and Qualification Groups

The 4-H project leader dependent variables were the number of tasks that the leaders did or did not perform and the number of tasks the leaders did or did not feel qualified to perform. The leaders were grouped into low and high leader task performance groups and low and high task qualified groups on the basis of the number of tasks the leader performed and the number which they felt qualified to perform. The low leader task performance group included leaders who performed from 1 through 29 tasks and the high leader task performance group included leaders who performed from 30 through 55 tasks.

The low leader task qualified group included leaders who felt qualified to perform from 1 through 29 tasks and the high leader task qualified group included leaders who felt qualified to perform from 30 through 55 tasks.

Frequency Extension Agents Provided Information by Various Teaching Methods

The agents' independent variables were the frequency agents provided information to leaders by five teaching methods. These variables were the frequency agents used radio, newspaper, home visits, training meetings, and newsletters.

The agents were divided into low and high percent groups according to the percent of leaders they had in their county who performed a high number of tasks. The two groups were the dependent variables. The original designation of from 30 through 55 tasks performed by leaders was used to determine the number of leaders in each county who performed a high number of tasks. The low agents were in the counties in which 1 through 24 percent of the leaders performed a high number of tasks. The high agents were in counties in which 25 percent or more of the leaders performed a high number of tasks.

IV. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The information obtained from the completed questionnaires was transferred to data cards and computations were made at The University of Tennessee Computing Center. The contingency table analysis program was used.

This program computes two-way frequency and percentage tables, chi-squares, contingency coefficients, and maximum likelihood ratios. Each variable may be categorized in several different ways; each way is referred to as a categorization. Output of this program includes:

(1) frequency tables, (2) row, column, and/or table percentages, and (3) chi-square and degrees of freedom (25:341).

Chi-square computations which reached the .05 level were accepted as being statistically significant.

V. MAJOR FINDINGS

Leaders' Personal Characteristics

1. Leaders' personal characteristics which were related to a leader being in a low or high task performance group were leaders' sex and occupation. Leaders who were in the high task performance group were females and were housewives, teachers, laborers, or professionals.

2. Leaders' personal characteristic which was related to a leader being in a low or high task qualified group was occupation. Leaders who were housewives, teachers, laborers, or professionals were more likely to be in the high task qualified group than leaders who were farmers. Leaders' sex and age were not significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task qualified group.

Leaders' Leadership Experience Characteristics

1. Leaders' leadership experience characteristics which were significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task performance group were the number of projects assisted with in 1967, number of project group meetings held in 1967, whether or not leader had served in more than one project area, and the number of 4-H Club

members helped in 1967. The number of years served as a leader was not significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task performance group. Study of leadership experience characteristics, excepting the number of years served, indicated that those with more experience were more likely to be in the high task performance group than leaders with little or none.

2. The leaders' leadership experience characteristic which was significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task qualified group was whether or not the leader had assisted in more than one project area. The number of project group meetings held in 1967, the number of years served as a project leader, number of projects assisted with in 1967, the number of members helped in 1967 were not significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task qualified group. Leaders with more leadership experience, with the exception of those who assisted in more than one project area, did not feel qualified to perform a higher number of tasks than leaders with little or no leadership experience.

Leaders' Training Characteristics

1. Leaders' training characteristics which were significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task performance group were whether or not the leader had attended any leader training meetings, attended project leader training meetings in 1967, and how well the leaders' job was explained to each when they first became a leader. The number of training meetings attended in 1967 and the need for

additional training were not significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task performance group. These findings indicated that leaders who had received more training were more likely to perform higher number of tasks than were leaders who had received little or no additional training.

2. Leaders' training characteristics which were related to a leader being in a low or high task qualified group were whether or not leader had attended training meetings, attended project leader training meetings in 1967, and how well the leaders' job was explained when they first became a leader. The number of training meetings attended in 1967 and the need for additional training were not significantly related to a leader being in a low or high task qualified group. These findings indicated that leaders who have received more training were more likely to feel qualified to perform a higher number of tasks than leaders who received little or no training. The recency of receiving training, and whether the leader felt a need for additional training, were not significantly related to the number of tasks the leader felt qualified to perform.

Agents' Frequency of Providing Information to Leaders by Various Teaching Methods

1. Agents who provided information to leaders frequently or occasionally by radio, home visits, training meetings, newspaper, and newsletter did not have a higher percent of leaders who performed a high number of tasks than agents who used those methods seldom or never.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn.

Leaders' Personal Characteristics

It was found that certain personal characteristics of the leaders were related to the number of tasks the leaders performed. Therefore, it was implied that more Extension educational work was done by leaders when a high percent of the leaders were females, and leaders who were housewives, teachers, laborers, or professionals, than when a high percent of the 4-H project leaders were males and leaders who were farmers.

Leaders' Leadership Experience

It was found that the more leadership experience which leaders had the more likely they were to perform a higher number of tasks. Thus, it was that, when Extension agents had provided opportunities for leaders to function in leadership roles, they thereby had increased the efforts of 4-H project leaders to provide educational experiences to 4-H Club members.

Leaders' Training Experience

It was found that the more training leaders had received the more likely they were to perform and feel qualified to perform a higher number of tasks. Thus, it was concluded that leaders performed and felt qualified to perform tasks expected of them when they had been

provided adequate related training. Furthermore, in providing such training, Extension had multiplied its teaching efforts through the project leader system by providing necessary training to qualify the leaders to perform those tasks expected of them.

Frequency With Which Agents Provided Information to Leaders by Various Teaching Methods

It was found that the frequency with which agents provided information to leaders by various teaching methods was not significantly related to whether the agent had a low or high percent of leaders who performed a high number of tasks. Thus, it was concluded that the frequency of using various teaching methods to provide information to leaders appeared to have little or no effect on the leaders' performance as project leader. However, only 27 agents had an opportunity to react to question on frequency of using methods.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that Extension agents who wish to increase the number of tasks performed by each leader consider selecting leaders who are females and those who are housewives, laborers, teachers, or professionals.

2. It is recommended that Extension agents consider the adequacy of the training they provide for leaders, and that they let leaders function in their proper leadership role in order to multiply the Extension educational efforts.

3. It is recommended that the major findings of this study be made available to state and county 4-H staffs for use in evaluating factors associated with the present 4-H project leader system in Tennessee counties.

4. It is recommended that further studies be done regarding frequency of agents providing information to leaders by various teaching methods and leaders' task performance in Tennessee counties.

5. It is recommended that studies be done concerning information provided to leaders with regard to the number of tasks they perform and feel qualified to perform in a random sample of Tennessee counties, and a random sample of leaders in those counties.

6. It is recommended that studies be done concerning the degree to which the various tasks performed by 4-H project leaders have on educational value for the 4-H Club member.

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